CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, California 95814

(916) 657-2666
FAX (916) 654-9780

file copy

January 21, 1998

John L. Winther, President
Delta Wetlands
3697 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 100
Lafayette, CA 94549

Dear John:

Thank you for your January 13, 1998 letter helping to prepare for our discussion on February 10. I would like to amplify on the quotation you ascribe to me from the November BDAC meeting.

I do not recall that Mr. Buck stated that it would be difficult to deliver water from in-Delta storage, nor do I recall making any response to suggest water deliveries from in-Delta facilities would be difficult. My recollection is that the discussion centered on the difference between in-Delta storage such as might be afforded by inundating one or more Delta islands, and near-Delta storage, as might be envisioned through such means as expanding an existing nearby reservoir. My thesis was that, from the standpoint of the flexibility of being able to conduct project export operations, both concepts would be essentially equivalent.

My view, expressed at the meeting, is that one of the factors that might differentiate the two concepts is the potential for organic carbon contributions resulting from in-Delta storage. I am aware of no definitive studies to prove whether inundation of peat soils and reservoir operations would increase or decrease organic carbon contributions to Delta export waters, although mechanisms have been hypothesized that could result in either outcome.

The other point I recall having made is that with in-Delta storage, a relatively large surface area would be required for a given volume of storage, as compared to a near-Delta alternative, due to the shallowness of the reservoir that would be created. I do not recall elaborating on this point at the meeting, but my thoughts are that a shallow reservoir tends not to be optimal as a drinking water source due to its potential for algal growths, and the relative inability to selectively withdraw from different strata within the reservoir as has been demonstrated useful in deeper reservoirs.

The other factor that would, in my opinion, differentiate the choice between in-Delta and near-Delta reservoirs is the amount of prime agricultural lands that would be consumed.

Cost will be another factor (secondary to environmental impact) that will have an effect on a decision between in-Delta and near-Delta storage facilities.

As the CALFED alternatives have evolved, we are treating in-Delta and near-Delta storage options equally, pending further evaluations that would be conducted in Phase III (implementation phase) of the Program, beginning next year. Meanwhile, we have not intentionally made representations that in-Delta storage would be superior or inferior to near-Delta storage. From my perspective, the answer is not yet known. We are looking forward to your visit on February 10, at which time we can discuss these issues in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Rick Woodard
Assistant Director